Claims

What is claimed is:

    1.   A method of locking user input elements on a small computer device, the method comprising:

        receiving an internally generated locking signal;

        setting a locked flag to indicate the user input elements are locked; and

5   ignoring input signals when the locked flag is set.

    2.   A method as defined in claim 1 further comprising:

        determining whether input signals relate to an unlock signal;

        if input signals do not relate to an unlock signal, ignore the input signal and

        if input signals relate to an unlock signal, unlocking the user input elements.

    3.   A method as defined in claim 2 wherein button presses create the input signals and wherein the act of determining whether input signals relate to an unlock signal comprises:

        determining whether the button presses occur within a predetermined time period.

    4.   A method as defined in claim 1 further comprising:

        displaying a message indicating that the user input elements are locked.

    5.   A method as defined in claim 1 wherein the small computer device comprises a timer and wherein the internally generated locking signal is generated following a predetermined time interval, the predetermined time interval managed by the timer.

    6.   A method as defined in claim 5 wherein the predetermined time interval relates to an automatic shutoff/sleep mode time interval.

    7.   A method as defined in claim 1 wherein the small computer device further comprises a calendar-type application program and wherein the internally generated locking

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signal is generated by the calendar-type application program in response to a predetermined event.

8. A method as defined in claim 1 wherein the user input element is a touch screen.

9. A method as defined in claim 1 wherein the small computer device comprises a timer used to automatically place the device in sleep mode after a predetermined period of time, the device further comprises calendar-type application program that provides reminder notifications to the user and wherein the device awakes from sleep mode when a reminder occurs during sleep mode; the method further comprising:

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ignoring input signals to allow the device to return to sleep mode following a predetermined period of time.

10. A computer system comprising:

user interface input elements;

a processing unit for recognizing user interface input signals; and

a locking application for locking the user interface elements, wherein the

5 processing unit ignores user interface input signals when the user interface elements are locked and wherein the locking application receives an internally generated lock signal.

11. A computer program product readable by a computer device and encoding instructions for executing a computer process for notifying a user of notification events, the process comprising:

receiving an internally generated locking signal;

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setting a locked flag to indicate the user input elements are locked; and

ignoring input signals when the locked flag is set.

12. A computer program product as defined in claim 11 wherein the process further comprises:

    determining whether input signals relate to an unlock signal;

    if input signals do not relate to an unlock signal, ignore the input signal and

    if input signals relate to an unlock signal, unlocking the user input elements.

13. A computer program product as defined in claim 11 wherein the process further comprises:

    displaying a message indicating that the user input elements are locked.

14. A computer program product as defined in claim 11 wherein the computer device comprises a timer and wherein the internally generated locking signal is generated following a predetermined time interval, the predetermined time interval managed by the timer.

15. A computer program product as defined in claim 14 wherein the predetermined time interval relates to an automatic shutoff/sleep mode time interval.

16. A computer program product as defined in claim 15 wherein the computer device further comprises a calendar-type application program and wherein the internally generated locking signal is generated by the calendar-type application program in response to a predetermined event.

17. A computer program product as defined in claim 11 wherein the user interface element is a touch screen.

18. A computer program product as defined in claim 11 wherein the computer device comprises a timer used to automatically place the device in sleep mode after a predetermined period of time, the device further comprises calendar-type application program that provides

reminder notifications to the user and wherein the device awakes from sleep mode when a

5   reminder occurs during sleep mode; the process further comprising:

ignoring input signals to allow the device to return to sleep mode following a

predetermined period of time.